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## IMMIGRATION AND CRIME

credibility. The main concern is the information he may impart to the jury. The best and most rigorous test, both of the honesty of the witness and the correctness of his testimony, is the test of cross-examination. An incompetent or venal expert, who might secure an official appointment, could to some extent hide behind it from this weapon. If the cross-examination does not always completely fulfil its functions, it is because of the lack of skill or ability of the examiner in the use of it. It remains, however, the most satisfactory test of the witness that has been devised, both in rigorousness and comprehensiveness. To weaken it in favor of a partial method of uncertain operation would seem to be a doubtful experiment.

EDWARD LINDSEY.

## IMMIGRATION AND CRIME.

In the January number of the *American Journal of Sociology*, Dr. Issac A. Hourwich, statistician in the Bureau of the Census, has a timely article on "Immigration and Crime." He takes to task the report of the New York State Superintendent of Prisons for 1909, which charges that the recent increase in crime in the state of New York has been due to the influx of vicious and ignorant classes through immigration. Dr. Hourwich has no difficulty in showing that there is no direct connection between immigration and crime in the United States, popular opinion to the contrary notwithstanding. On the contrary, as he shows, the wave of criminality in New York state, of which the superintendent of prisons complains, coincides with the lowest ebb of immigration, whereas the high tide of immigration for a number of decades past has coincided with a decrease of crime.

What Dr. Hourwich proves in his interesting paper has, of course, long been known to statisticians and sociologists, namely, that there is no *direct* connection in our country between immigration and crime. On the contrary, the average foreign-born citizen of this country is, if anything, slightly more law-abiding than the native-born white American. This is especially true of the immigrants from northern Europe and also of those from Russia. In general, these people come from countries where government and criminal courts are more efficient than in the United States. Hence, among immigrants from such countries there is greater respect for law, despite the fact that these people are away from home in a strange environment, than there is among the average native-born Americans. As Dr. Hourwich shows, the increase of crime corresponds not with the increase of immigration, but rather with periods of economic and industrial depression. In other words, the economic prosperity which favors immigration tends at the same

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time to lessen crime, while, *vice versa*, economic depressions check immigration and at the same time tend greatly to increase crime. These familiar sociological truths, Dr. Hourwich demonstrates beyond any serious question.

However, he carries the implications of his argument much too far when he allows the impression of his article to be that there are no grounds for putting any restrictions upon immigration whatsoever (beyond those which now exist) in criminal statistics. He neglects to mention the well-known fact that while the immigrants from northern Europe are generally law-abiding, some of the immigrants from southern Europe add considerably to our criminal classes. Thus, the Italians in 1900 constituted but 4.7 per cent of our foreign-born population, while in 1904, according to the prison census taken in that year, they furnished 14.4 per cent of the foreign-born white major offenders committed to prison during that year. In other words, even though we allow for a slight increase in the proportion of Italians among our foreign-born between 1900 and 1904, apparently they contributed nearly three times their proportion of major offenders in comparison with other foreign-born elements. Prof. Fairchild, in his book upon "Greek Immigration," has shown that the same thing is true also of our Greek immigrants. In other words, the exaggerated criminal tendencies of certain of our immigrants from southern Europe is offset and concealed in statistics by the law-abiding tendencies of our immigrants from northern Europe.

Again, while there is no direct relation between immigration and crime in this country other than that which has just been noted regarding certain classes of immigrants, there probably is a very great and obscure indirect relation. This is suggested by the well-known fact that while the foreign-born themselves do not contribute out of proportion to their numbers to the criminal classes, the children of the foreign-born apparently do. The special prison census of 1904, for example, says "of the native white prisoners [committed during 1904] 29.8 per cent were of foreign parentage, while of the entire native white population only 18.8 per cent were of foreign parentage." In other words, the children of the foreign-born in 1904 contributed nearly 60 per cent more in proportion to their numbers than they should have contributed to those convicted and sent to prison. While this does not suggest that there is any necessary relation between race or nationality and criminal tendencies, it does suggest that there is a very considerable indirect relation between our present unregulated immigration and crime. Our immigrants, in other words, frequently fail to better their

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condition by coming to this country, and while they themselves may not drop into the criminal class, their children frequently do.

Again, the very great criminal tendencies among the native-born whites in this country may be perhaps in part ascribed to the competition which free immigration has brought to the lower elements among the native whites. As Dr. Hourwich himself has demonstrated, there is a close connection between disadvantageous economic circumstances and crime, and there can be scarcely any question but that the native white laborer in this country has very often found himself in disadvantageous circumstances on account of the overwhelming influx of cheap foreign labor. The whole question, therefore, of the relation of immigration and crime still remains an open one in spite of what protagonists for restriction or non-restriction have had to say.

C. A. ELLWOOD.

## THE FEEBLE-MINDED DELINQUENT.

The introduction of a bill into the New York legislature providing for the establishment of a custodial asylum for feeble-minded male delinquents brings to a focus in that state the problem of the mentally defective prisoner. For over a year a committee of the Prison Association of New York has stimulated interest in this problem. During the past year, several institutions in New York have given careful attention to the question, and at the beginning of 1912, through arrangement with the commissioner of corrections in New York City, a careful card index was installed in the "Tombs," which gives to the psychiatric examiner of the Prison Association a chance to discover in each entering prisoner any signs of mental defectiveness. Dr. Parker, the above-mentioned examiner, estimates that at least 1,500 men pass through the Tombs each year who are mentally defective and semi-responsible.

The proper treatment of the feeble-minded delinquent is one of the most important problems now before the penologists and criminologists of this country. Its significance is especially appreciated by the institutional heads who see their prisons and reformatories "clogged," as they often express it, with mentally backward and deficient prisoners, who, in the words of Dr. Christian, of Elmira Reformatory, "have no place in a reformatory in the first place, and are a hindrance to its work for the brighter boys."

The proportion of feeble-mindedness in institutions is not yet generally established. Dr. Christian, by estimating those who impress him at once or gradually as mentally defective, believes that even 40 per cent of the inmates of Elmira Reformatory fall under the head of the mentally defective. Dr. Goddard, of Vineland, believes that all